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ABSTRACT

A study compared the educational performances and personal goal attainments of the Adult High School Diploma (AHS) and General Educational and Development Program (GED) graduates from the 1977 through 1979 classes at Southeastern Community College in Whiteville, North Carolina. A questionnaire, designed to elicit GED graduates' reasons for their program selections, was completed by 39 of the 161 GED graduates attending Southeastern Community College during the years mentioned. Data were collected for grade point averages, average number of quarter hours, and types of programs entered by GED and AHS graduates. Finally, the performance of the two types of GED graduates--nonstudy and pre-GED study groups--was compared. Data revealed a slight difference in the overall postsecondary performance of the AHS graduates as compared with the GED graduates. Students chose the GED equivalency program for personal satisfaction, a no-study time element, and the short-term convenience; therefore, the results did produce satisfaction for immediate personal needs. Responses to the GED graduate questionnaire imply that the increase of the popularity of GED testing relates to the growing social problems of low income, unemployment, and pressures to succeed immediately. (MN)

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE POST-SECONDARY PERFORMANCE OF ADULT HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA GRADUATES AND GED EQUIVALENCY GRADUATES IN A TWO-YEAR INSTITUTION

A Research Report
Presented to
The Administration
SOUTHEASTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Whiteville, North Carolina

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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June 15, 1981

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PROPOSAL
Section 1

I. Introduction or Background:

The high school completion program at Southeastern Community College is composed of two divisions, the Adult High School Diploma Program and the GED High School Equivalency Tests. For the past three years, the trend among public school dropouts has evolved in a choice of the GED program instead of the Adult High School Diploma program at this institution. At the present time, the state department's guidelines require a minimum number of hours of study for the Adult High School Diploma and no study preparation requirement for the GED testing program. At Southeastern the GED applicant is encouraged to enroll for supervised study, thereby making certain that his academic level is sufficient for passing the GED tests.

During the student's contact with an adult high school or GED instructor, his goals for further training and opportunities are analyzed. Graduates from both high school completion programs are highly encouraged to enroll in SCC and are referred to counselors for an examination of the available programs.

II. Statement of the Problem:

The plan of this research is to compare the educational performances and personal goal attainments of the Adult High School Diploma and GED graduates of the 1977, 1978 and 1979 classes. This will be done by interpretation of various data obtained including: 1) results of a GED graduate survey, and 2) examinations of the college performance of these AHS and GED graduates.

III. Purpose:

The purpose of this project is to determine which high school completion program prepares the individual better for further training and satisfies his personal needs.

IV. Significance:

The significance of this research is to gain insight for program improvements in the areas of study requirements and course content to be utilized in the Adult High School Diploma and GED High School Equivalency programs.

V. Hypothesis:

1. At least 40% of the total program graduates attended Southeastern Community College after high school completion.
2. Since a study program is required of the Adult High School Diploma enrollees, these students are better prepared and perform better on college-level work than the GED students.
3. The GED testing program became more popular than the AHS Diploma program with the public because of the time element involved in the latter.

VI. Definitions

1. GED - (General Educational Development)

   A nationally standardized high school equivalency test comprised of 5 sub-tests: Writing Skills; Social Studies; Science; Reading; and Mathematics. In North Carolina a total score of 225 points is required for passing with a score of at least 35 points on each test.

2. GPA - (Grade Point Average)

   Based on the quarter system, SCC uses the quality point credit whereby: 4 points are awarded per credit hour earned for an A; 3 points are awarded per credit hour earned for a B; 2 points are awarded per credit hour earned for a C; and 1 point per hour is awarded per credit hour earned for a D. The total points are summed and then divided by the total number of credit hours--the result is the GPA.

VII. Delimitations

1. There is no significance given to the intelligence levels of the students prior to entering the high school programs.
2. There is no data available to provide comparison data of the GPA of other college students to the college-bound AHS and GED graduates.

REVIEW OF RESEARCH
Section 2

The importance of having a high school diploma has long been recognized by employers and institutions of higher academic and vocational training. With more people compelled into the work-force population and more jobs overtaken by computer technology, the job competition is intolerable for people who lack proper education, skills, and experience. Also with rising tuition costs and enforcement of entrance requirements, post-secondary education challenges an individual to compete even more with others to obtain proper education and prerequisite job skills.

During the past 15 years, an increasing demand has erupted for provision of continuing education for adults who did not complete high school. In November, 1966, Congress passed the Adult Education Act to provide for the establishments of programs for adults to continue at least a second level of education. The purpose of this continuation was for individuals to secure training necessary to become employable and responsible citizens. Even in 1978, 82.5 million out of 152.5 million adults in the United States were not high school graduates. Twenty-six million of these non-graduates were enrolled in programs to complete their high school education or to receive future job training. (Hunter and Harman p. 28).

A study by Hunter and Harman (1974) ranks the adult population in North Carolina without a high school diploma as being third from the top of non-completions by state census. In 1978, fifty percent of the adults in North Carolina who were

sixteen years old and older had less than a high school education. (Hunter and Harman, p. 32). The State Plan for Adult Basic Education states, according to the 1970 population census, that 1,091,715 adults have completed more than eighth grade but less than the twelfth. This 1970 census figure only provides Columbus County with data concerning the population with less than an eighth grade education as 8,597. No information is available to determine the number who completed eighth grade but have less than a twelfth grade education in Columbus County.

In 1978, a decade of study was completed to describe the types of educational programs in which adult learners attended. The third highest ranking included the public school and adult education activities. (Miller, p. 16).

Cyril Houle presented results of his case studies placing adult learners who return to school into three categories (Smith, p 400). These include the goal oriented who want a diploma, the learning oriented who enjoy learning, and the activity oriented who tend to socialize.

The three categories of adult learners can be related to the retention rate. According to research on personological profiles related to GED retention, self-concept and personal values were the largest factors in determining the success of a student in a program (Wilson, p. 175). Additionally, it is estimated that one-third of the students enrolled in adult basic education programs drop out for job status, health problems, child care problems, family demands, inconvenient class schedules, lack of interest, or poor student-teacher relationships (Harman p. 68).

This one-third population of dropouts present characteristics as described by Russell Wilson. Some of these characteristics are irresponsibility, lack of prolonged effort, and impatience. Thus, the location of the

student's placement and success within the program are influenced by his self-concept and personal characteristics.

According to the United States Office of Education, statistics in 1976 indicate: 32 percent of the adult basic education students enrolled are in the beginning grade levels of 1-4; 33 percent of the adult basic education students are in 5-8 grade levels; and 35 percent at the advanced levels of 9-12 grades. Of these divisions, 9 percent received the eighth grade level certification and 11 percent passed the GED tests (Harman, p. 76).

The best type of instruction the adult learner receives while enrolled in a high school completion program has been debatable concerning retention and success. Roberson compiled a study of sample GED graduates in North Carolina in 1979 to compare learning laboratory approach versus any non-learning laboratory approach (Roberson, p. 5). His conclusions indicated that learning laboratory candidates and non-learning laboratory graduates were equally successful while taking the GED tests to complete high school. No studies have been conducted to indicate the success of students in the Adult High School Diploma Program within North Carolina.

When completing high school and desiring post-secondary work, the adult learner has been found to enroll part-time in a two year college. The program most often selected by this enrollee is an agricultural-extension class or a non-credit college course (Miller, p. 16). Another study completed in 1966 reported that 41.5 percent of adult learners do not graduate in the programs they selected (Bean, p. 155).

As one can conclude from this review of research, the success of the adult who returns to school depends largely on his self-concept. One ponders, though, how much encouragement these cases received to complete high school and even to pursue some post-secondary and job-training skills. This leads the reader

to wonder if retention rate of these adults would have increased and research could be presented in comparing their performance in the pre- and post-secondary programs with the regular of age student.

METHODOLOGY
Section 3

During the 1978-1980 school year periods, an increase developed in the number of GED graduates at Southeastern Community College. At this same time, a decrease developed in the number of Adult High School Diploma program graduates. Concerns for this reversed trend of adult high school completion at Southeastern motivated this research. Therefore, the groups selected for this study were from the Adult High School Diploma program and the GED Equivalency testing program.

The first step in this study was to examine the GED graduates' reasons for their program selections. Thus, a questionnaire was developed to obtain this information. Ten most commonly heard reasons and a space for self-explanations were included on the questionnaire. Also included was an item concerning personal and educational goal attainment after GED completion. See Appendix A, p. 21 for a copy of the questionnaire.

The second step involved collecting information concerning the performance of both groups of graduates in post-secondary training. From student files a list was compiled of all the 1977-1979 AHS and GED graduates who attended SCC after high school completion. During this process, the following information was also extracted from the students' files:

1. the type of program (technical, occupational, or college transfer) entered and how many hours accumulated at the time of study.
2. the grade point average at the time of this study.
3. if graduated in college area, what degree obtained.

The third step compared the data collected in step two according to the two separate groups. Grade point averages were found for each group per class. Also the average number of quarter hours were calculated and recorded for each group by class. Next, the types of programs which the graduates entered were tallied for each group by class.

The final step compared the performance of the two types of GED graduates who attended SCC--non-study versus pre-GED study groups. This step examined the average GED test score results, the grade point averages of each sub-group, and the average preparatory study time for the enrollees.

FINDINGS
Section 4

During the first step of this research, seventy-five of the one hundred and sixty-one GED graduates within the 1977-1979 era were recipients of the questionnaire. These seventy-five GED graduates were also the students who returned to SCC for post-secondary training. Thirty-nine participants (52 percent) responded to the questionnaire and thirteen (17 percent) were returned undeliverable. The following is a tally of the graudates' responses to the items on the questionnaire.

NUMBER OF RESPONSES			QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM
10	=	26%	1. I didn't have the time to enroll in a study program to prepare myself because of my working schedule.
3	=	8%	2. I didn't have the money and transportation to come many times to study; so, I took a chance to finish by the GED tests.
2	=	5%	3. I had a babysitting problem--no one to take care of my children so I could study in the Learning Center or extension classes.

NUMBER OF RESPONSES			QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM
5	=	13%	4. Personal problems at home forced me to try to complete high school by GED as soon as I could.
9	=	23%	5. I needed to get my high school diploma quickly because of army entrance, chance of job promotion or college entrance. (One of these responses underlined job promotion and three underlined college entrance.)
2	=	5%	6. My high school counselor or job supervisor said it was the best way for me to finish high school.
28	=	72%	7. I took the GED just for self-satisfaction of having my high school diploma. If I had not passed it, I probably would have enrolled to study and tried it again.
4	=	10%	8. I didn't know SCC had another high school completion program called the Adult High School Diploma Program.
11	=	28%	9. I felt the GED was a quicked way to finish high school than the AHS Diploma Program.
0	=	0%	10. I thought the GED certificate would be more valuable to me than a high school diploma.
8	=	21%	11. OTHER REASONS:

"I wanted to become a nurse, also to take business courses to provide more income. Our income is and was limited. I was not able to finish college as I had planned because of health. My health has kept me from obtaining personal and educational goals I had in life."

"I couldn't get the Adult High School Diploma Program where I'm at."

"I was attending a private school and their materials were below my level of learning when I reached the 11th grade."

"My high school principal told me to 'hit the road.'"

"I would have been a year behind my class because of relocation, so I took the GED."

"Because of the only way. The place I took it had to obtain it."

"I needed a high school diploma to get into the electrical technical course at SCC."

11. OTHER REASONS: (continued)

"Mrs. McLawhorn and my parents thought that I would learn more and the GED would be more of a challenge for me."

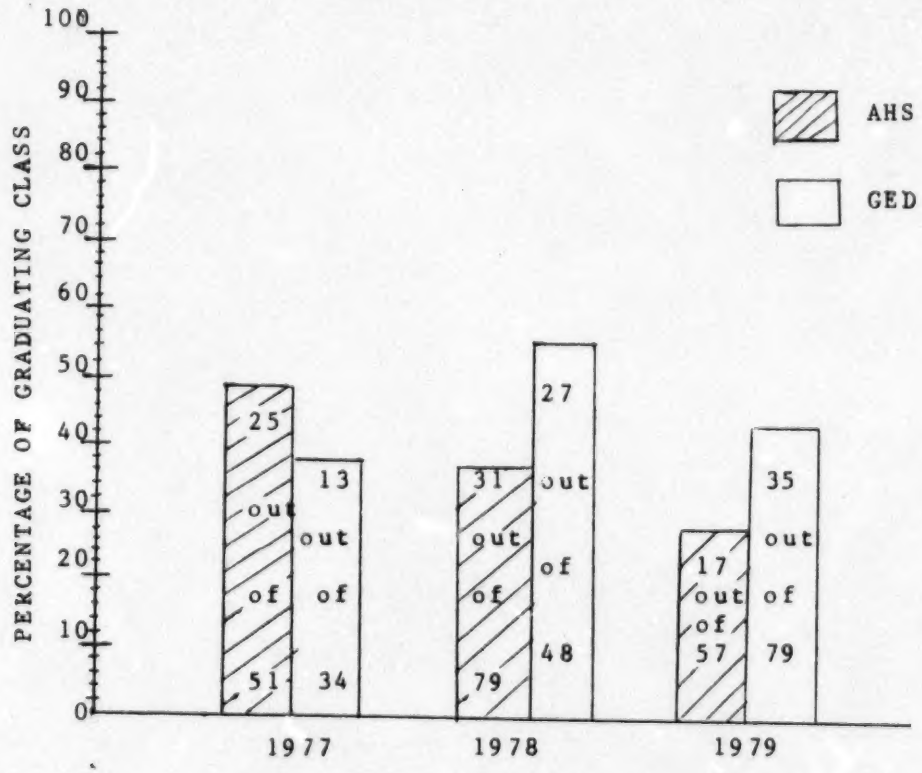
12. Has the GED completion helped you obtain your personal or educational goals?

31	=	79%	YES
3	=	7%	NO
1	=	3%	"It could in the future"
4	=	11%	No comment

See Appendix B for more comments which some graduates wrote on the Questionnaire.

The second step in this project dealt with the AHS and GED graduates who entered Southeastern on a part-time or full-time basis after high school completion. Graph I below demonstrates the data collected to each completion group and year.

GRAPH I. AHS AND GED GRADUATES ATTENDING SCC FROM 1977 - 1979



From this graph, it was calculated that seventy-seven (41 percent) of the 187 Adult High School Diploma Program graduates of 1977-1979 enrolled at SCC. Seventy-five (47 percent) of the 161 GED graduates also enrolled in the programs at SCC. Therefore, respecting both groups, 44 percent of the graduates enrolled at Southeastern to obtain further training. Also found in the student files was the enrollment of one graduate from each of the two programs attending another institution instead of SCC after high school completion.

Other information collected in the second step concerns the number of quarter hours up to the date of this study obtained by the graduates and the programs in which the graduates selected. Table I compares the AHS graduates with the GED graduates in these divisions.

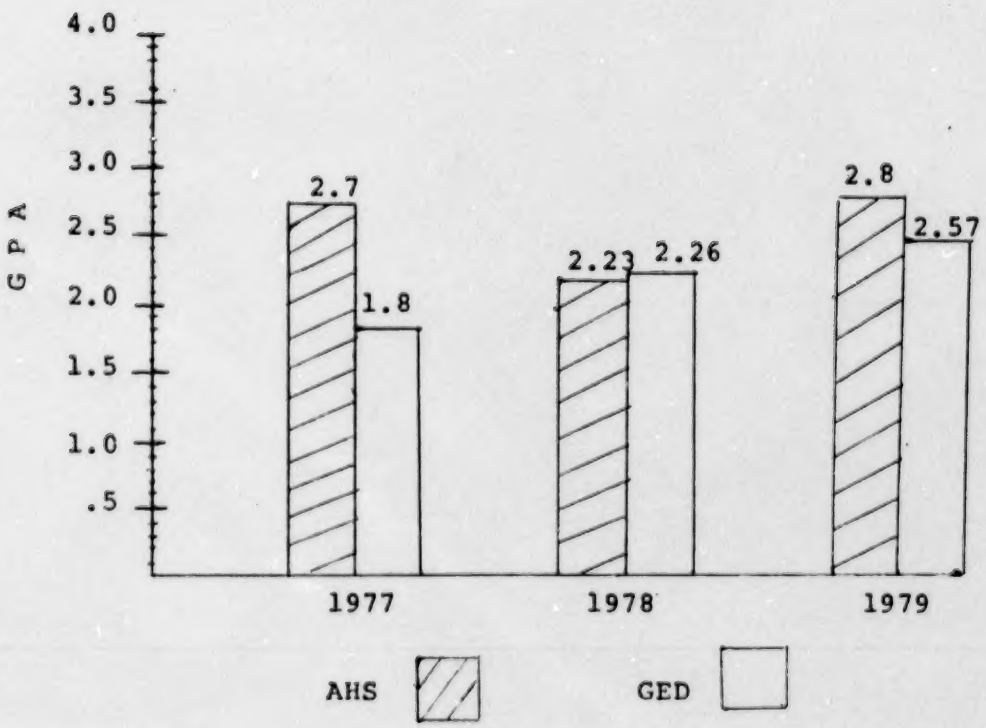
TABLE I. Credit Hours and Programs Attended

PROGRAM	YEAR	AVERAGE QTR. HRS.	STUDENT STATUS	SCC PROGRAMS ATTENDED
AHS	1977	56.86	3 currently enrolled 5 graduated: (1 LPN 1 AA-Fine Arts 1 AA-Nursing 1 AA-Secretarial Technology 1 AA-Music 2 N. C. 2 withdrew)	TECHNICAL 1 - Nursing 1 - Criminal Justice 2 - Business OCCUPATIONAL 2 - Agriculture 2 - Welding 3 - Child Development 1 - Cosmetology 1 - Electronics 2 - Nursing COLLEGE TRANSFER 2 - Fine Arts 3 - College MISCELLANEOUS - 2
GED	1977	42.9	1 currently enrolled 1 graduated (AA - Fine Arts)	TECHNICAL 2 - Business 2 - Criminal Justice OCCUPATIONAL 1 - Agriculture 1 - Welding 1 - Cosmetology 1 - Nursing 1 - Pottery COLLEGE TRANSFER 4
AHS	1978	33.9	6 currently enrolled 2 graduated: (1 CDE Diploma 1 AA - Teacher's Associate) 3 Audited 1 withdrew	TECHNICAL 8 - Business 2 - Forestry - Recreation 1 - Child Development OCCUPATIONAL 5 - Child Development 5 - Welding 1 - Agriculture COLLEGE TRANSFER - 5 MISCELLANEOUS - 4
GED	1978	31.3	5 currently enrolled 2 graduated: (LPN) 2 audited 2 withdrew	TECHNICAL 10 - Business 2 - Nursing 1 - Criminal Justice OCCUPATIONAL 2 - Welding 1 - Child Development 2 - Electrical 1 - AME - Auto 1 - AHR COLLEGE TRANSFER - 3 MISCELLANEOUS -3
AHS	1979	34.9	9 currently enrolled 4 withdrew	TECHNICAL 4 - Business 2 - Criminal Justice 1 - Forestry - Recreation OCCUPATIONAL 1 - Welding 1 - Electronics 1 - Industrial Maintenance COLLEGE TRANSFER - 7
GED	1979	34.0	11 currently enrolled 3 graduated: (1 Electronics 2 Cosmetology) 3 withdrew 2 transferred to another institution after 1 year at SCC	TECHNICAL 1 - Nursing 1 - Forestry 4 - Business 1 Criminal Justice OCCUPATIONAL 2 - Electronics 2 - PME - Auto 4 - Child Development 4 - Nursing 3 - Welding 3 - Cosmetology COLLEGE TRANSFER - 7

The information supplied by Table I on page 11 indicates that the average quarter hours the graduates had in a college program were 38.98. Also, the occupational and college transfer programs were most popular in post-secondary training. As of this date, 8.5% (13 out of 152) of the high school dropout graduates attending SCC graduated in a college program.

The second step of this research also provided the grade point average of the graduates while they were enrolled in the post-secondary programs. Below, Graph II notes these averages according to GPA and for the graduating classes.

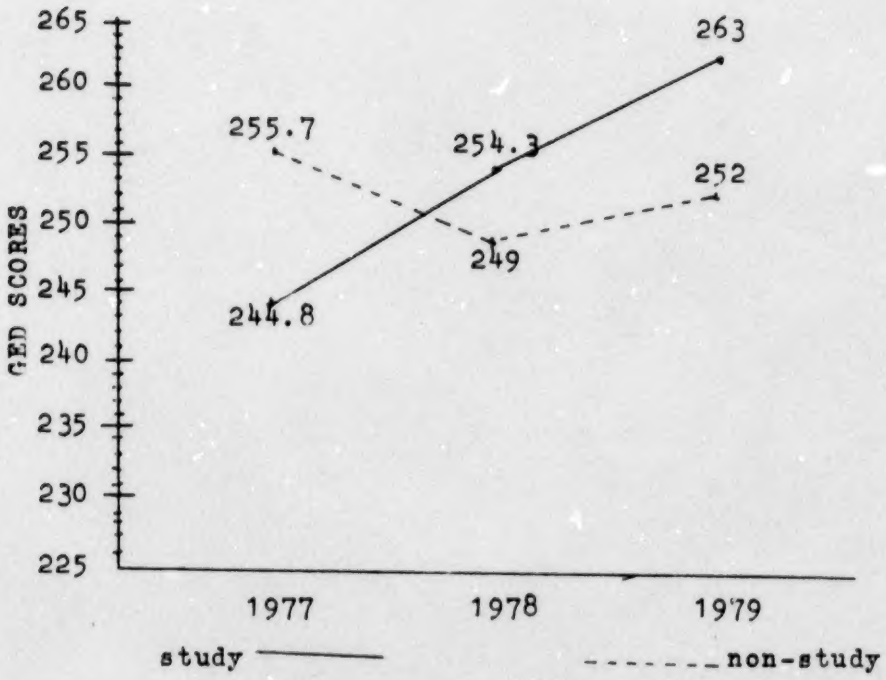
GRAPH II. AVERAGE GPA OF HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT GRADUATES ATTENDING SCC



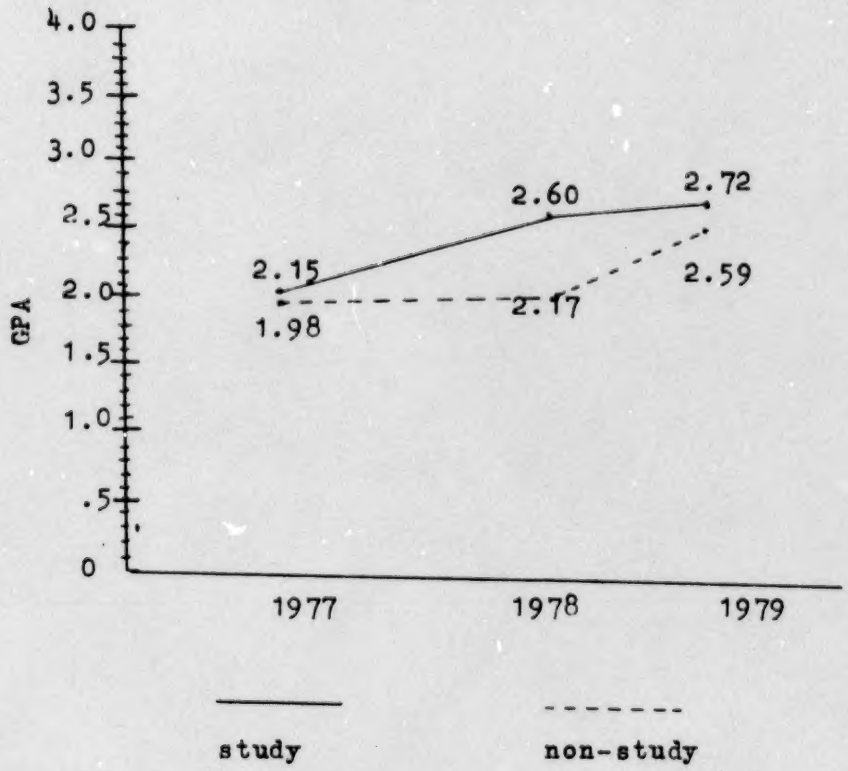
Graph II indicated that the average grade point average of the Adult High School Diploma student was 2.58 and the average grade point average of a GED graduate was 2.21.

Finally in the third step, the performances of the GED graduates attending SCC were examined. This group was divided into subgroups, those who enrolled to study prior to GED testing and those who did not. From the entire three years, 48 percent (36 out of 75) of the graduates who attended SCC studies in the Learning Center or extension classes prior to GED testing. The GED scores and GPA of the study subgroup were higher than the non-study subgroup as indicated by Graph III and IV.

GRAPH III. COLLEGE BOUND GED SCORES OF STUDY AND NON-STUDY GROUPS



GRAPH IV. GED COLLEGE BOUND --- GPA OF STUDY AND NON-STUDY GROUPS



CONCLUSIONS

Section 5

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this research was to determine which high school completion program prepares the individual better for further training and satisfies his personal needs. From the data presented in the preceding section, it can be concluded that there was a slight difference in the overall post-secondary performance of the Adult High School Diploma graduates as compared with the GED graduates. Also from the data presented, it can be concluded that the student chose the GED equivalency program for a chance for personal satisfaction, a no study time element, and the short term convenience; therefore, the results did produce satisfaction for immediate personal needs.

Possibly the responses from the GED graduate questionnaires imply that the increase of the popularity of GED testing relates to the growing social problems of low income, unemployment, and pressures to succeed instantly. Also not Graph I which indicated more GED graduates enrolling in the college programs. Furthermore, related to this trend is the selecting of occupational programs by both the GED and AHS graduates as post-secondary training as shown in Table I. However, the high school dropouts who enroll to prepare themselves before graduating from the high school programs implies a higher academic average within a post-secondary confinement. This is demonstrated in the grade point averages in Graphs II and IV and the GED test scores in Graph III. Noted in Table I is the average quarter hours in which the Adult High School Diploma graduates accumulated quarter hours higher than the average quarter hours of GED

graduates. Also in Table I, the stability of the Adult High School Diploma graduates is demonstrated in their graduation from a college program or their being currently enrolled in a college program compared with the incompletes of the GED graduate in respect to the percentage of their classes who attended post-secondary training.

Concluding from Graphs II and IV, the Adult High School Diploma graduates and the GED equivalency tests graduates have proven to be solid C-average students. With no available average GPA for the entire institution's student body, there exists no comparisons to infer that these previous high school dropouts perform better or worse than the rest of the student body.

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APPENDIX A

August 12, 1980 19
The Learning Center
Southeastern Community College
Whiteville, NC 28472

Dear GED Graduate:

We are currently collecting data to evaluate our Adult High School Diploma Program and the GED testing program. Please check the appropriate responses and return this form to me in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope by August 22, 1980.

The reason(s) why I took the GED tests to finish my high school education were:

- ☐ I didn't have the time to enroll in a study program to prepare myself because of my working schedule.
- ☐ I didn't have the money and transportation to come many times to study; so, I took a chance to finish by the GED tests.
- ☐ I had a babysitting problem--no one to take care of my children so I could study in the Learning Center or extension classes.
- ☐ Personal problems at home forced me to try to complete high school by GED as soon as I could.
- ☐ I needed to get my high school diploma quickly because of army entrance, chance of job promotion, or college entrance.
- ☐ My high school counselor or job supervisor said it was the best way for me to finish high school.
- ☐ I took the GED just for self-satisfaction of having my high school diploma. If I had not passed it, I probably would have enrolled to study and tried it again.
- ☐ I didn't know SCC had another high school completion program called the Adult High School Diploma Program.
- ☐ I felt the CED was a quicker way to finish high school than the AHS Diploma Program.
- ☐ I thought the GED certificate would be more valuable to me than a high school diploma.
- ☐ OTHER REASONS. Please explain

_____

_____

YES NO Has the GED completion helped you obtain your personal or educational goals?

Please do not sign your name. Thank you for your time in completing this survey.

Sincerely,

Kay B McLawhorn

Kay B. McLawhorn
Chief GED Examiner

APPENDIX B

COMMENTS MADE BY GED GRADUATES ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE

"I only had one hour left to take in high school and was ready to start college. I am now a whole year ahead of my former classmates! Thanks to the GED program!!"

"I had a GED from Dept. of Defense and the scores were not high enough to take college courses so I retook it."

"Thank you for your help and kind consideration."

"The program helped me in my own personal way. This program should be continued at all cost."

"To complete my lower schooling so that any college courses taken would be credited."

"I know a lot more guys that it would help."